

INFLUENZA FACT SHEET



What is influenza (the flu)?

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat, and sometimes the lungs. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. The best way to prevent flu is by getting a flu vaccine each year.

Will the flu shot protect me from COVID-19?

No, because they are caused by different viruses. However, getting a flu vaccine is more important than ever during 2020-2021 to protect yourself and the people around you from flu and to help reduce the strain on healthcare systems responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Who should get the flu vaccine?

Health experts recommend that **everyone** 6 months of age and older get a flu shot. It is especially important for people with underlying health conditions to get the flu vaccine because of their increased risk for flu-related complications.

I got the flu shot last year, do I need to get it again?

Yes! The flu changes and researchers develop a new vaccine each year for the strain(s) that are expected. People's immune protection from the flu shot also declines over time so annual vaccination is important.

I've never had the flu, why do I need the flu shot?

Just because you've never had the flu doesn't mean you can't get it! Even healthy people can get very sick from the flu.

What is the effectiveness of the flu vaccine?

According to the CDC, the flu shot reduces the likelihood of having to go to the doctor for flu-related illness by 40-60% and hospitalizations by 40-74%.

Will the flu shot make me sick?

No, because the vaccine is made with an inactive, partial, or a weakened flu virus. Some people do experience mild side-effects such as a headache, low-grade fever, or muscle aches afterwards but these side effects typically only last 1-2 days. Serious reactions to the vaccine are very rare.

When should I get a flu shot?

Ideally, early in the flu season (September or October) but because the flu can last until April, it isn't too late to be vaccinated!